

20
John T Wood
Hamford Ohio
REPORT

OF A

COMMITTEE ON FREEDMEN,

IN PARTS OF

Tennessee and the Mississippi Valley,

Co Friends' Board of Control,

THIRD MONTH, 1865.

CINCINNATI, OHIO:

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1865.

At a meeting of "FRIENDS' BOARD OF CONTROL," representing the associated Yearly Meetings of the West, held 1st month 10th, 1865, it was deemed advisable to procure the services of two Friends to make a tour of inspection through the Camps of the Freedmen in the Department of the Cumberland, and in the Mississippi Valley, especially to look into the condition of the schools, the necessity for Orphan Asylums, &c., and report as early as practicable, making such suggestions as they may see proper.

Our friends Joseph Dickinson, of Richmond, and John M. Macy, of Lewisville, Indiana, responded to our request, and have produced the following Report of their labors through the Cumberland, and as far as Helena, Arkansas, on the Mississippi. At this place they were joined by our friend Thomas Clarkson Hill, of Carthage, Indiana, (who had subsequently accepted the appointment of General Agent). John M. Macy returning home, Thomas C. Hill and Joseph Dickinson continued the journey and closed the report, which is as follows:

TO FRIENDS' BOARD OF CONTROL
REPRESENTING THE
Associated Yearly Meetings of the West
FOR THE
RELIEF OF FREEDMEN.

WE arrived at Nashville, Tennessee, on the 19th day of 1st month, 1865.

The population of this city, which was formerly about fifty thousand, has been almost doubled during the war. It is situated in a beautiful rolling country, and although nearly all the vacant lots, and hundreds of acres adjoining, are occupied by temporary business houses, dwellings, and huts, many more are in demand, and rents are extremely high. About fifteen thousand Freedmen are crowded into and around the city in shanties, smoke-houses, and other out buildings. One large house, the roof of which had been burned, we found occupied by about twenty colored families, who are paying from eight to twelve dollars per month each, for single rooms, with nothing more than an oil-cloth, or something of the kind, stretched over their beds as a shelter against snow and rain.

Outside of the city is a camp for such colored people as are dependent upon Government for support, numbering about one thousand. These have recently been supplied with clothing by the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association, through their local agent, W. F. Mitchel, who showed us much kind attention.

The condition of this camp is lamentable. Many of the barracks and tents are exceedingly filthy and offensive. Sickness

and suffering abound, and from five to seven deaths occur daily. During the first eleven days of last month the fatality was much greater, averaging ten per day.

As we were passing, a woman begged of the agent a box in which to bury her child. For a considerable length of time the dead were buried without either coffins or boxes. The recent advance of Hood's army upon Nashville caused a large number of these people to flee before it, and the aged and infirm, as well as the sick and those exhausted by a journey of from sixty to ninety miles, in midwinter, principally on foot, were left here, which partly accounts for this deplorable state of things. One school-house has been erected in this camp, and W. F. Mitchel has also secured the use of a large frame building for an asylum for the orphan children, of whom he thought there were one hundred. We could not hear of much suffering for the want of food or clothing among the Freedmen in the city.

There are six schools, which have an aggregate attendance of six hundred pupils, and about one-third of them pay for their tuition. Owing to the crowded condition of the city, we see no way by which we can at present further provide for the instruction of these people, except by erecting the necessary buildings.

In consequence of the unsettled condition of affairs south of Nashville, we did not think it prudent to visit the camps of Freedmen at Murfreesboro, Decatur, and Huntsville. At Murfreesboro we learn there are about two hundred and fifty, who are comparatively comfortable, having one school in operation.

At Decatur and Huntsville, Ala., there are near twelve hundred and fifty, who have suffered much this winter, from being driven from place to place by the Southern army, but who now occupy their original camps again. We had some clothing forwarded from Nashville for their relief.

Hendersonville.

On the farm known as General Donaldson's, sixteen miles north of Nashville, is a camp of seven hundred persons, who fled before the rebel army from near Pulaski, about eighty miles south of Nashville. In addition to the sufferings and many other hardships attending this long midwinter march,

they lost much of their clothing and almost all of their bedding and other property. The negro quarters and other buildings on this farm afford shelter for a considerable number, yet more than one-half of them are living in worn-out soldiers' tents, without any cooking utensils. We at once appropriated fifty dollars for camp-kettles and mess-pans.

This apparently healthy location is, in many other respects, a favorable one. Wood and water are convenient, and log-cabins are being rapidly put up. The sick are comfortably cared for in a brick house near by.

Under so many discouraging circumstances we were surprised to see them looking so well and cheerful.

Our agents will immediately attend to supplying their necessities in the way of clothing, from the stock on hand in Nashville. Here we think there will soon be a favorable opening for schools.

Gallatin

Is the county seat of Sumner county, twenty-six miles north of Nashville, on the Louisville Railroad, and has a population of about twenty-five hundred, fifteen hundred of which are colored. In the camp near by there are four hundred and sixty-two Freedmen, living in very poor tents, which are soon to be exchanged for better ones. Although they are scantily clothed, both their persons and tents present as cleanly and tidy appearance as could be expected. Here, as well as at Hendersonville, Government will employ them on the adjoining farms. We think that both of these camps are under efficient management, and that schools should soon be opened in them. In the town of Gallatin are six Friends engaged in teaching the Freedmen. We attended these schools, and are favorably impressed with them.

Clarksville

Is another military post, situated on the Cumberland River, about sixty miles below Nashville, and has a population of about four thousand, one half colored. The banks of the river vary in height from two hundred to four hundred feet. The country is rolling, and apparently healthy. Several colored regiments of soldiers have been formed here since the Union army has held the post.

One mile and a half distant is the "home farm," where we found about thirteen hundred Freedmen, dependent upon Government for support.

At Providence, two miles down the river, is a town of fifteen hundred inhabitants, two-thirds of whom are colored, under the protection of a strong fort. The condition of this people at these three points, as respects clothing and many of the conveniences of life, is much better than at any other locality which we visited in the Department of the Cumberland.

This is mainly owing to the favorable circumstances under which they left their homes, and came into the Union lines. Many of them hauled their clothing, bedding, &c., into the camps with their master's teams.

Through the energy and perseverance of Captain Brunt, several long one story frame buildings have been put up, and so divided as to furnish each family with a room about eight by twelve feet, having a brick fireplace and chimney. He has also in the camp a shoe-shop, in which several of the old men and boys are learning to make shoes, under the instruction of a practical shoemaker, a soldier detailed to that service.

About six hundred are attending schools, taught by twelve teachers, nine of whom are Friends. We visited several of these schools, and had also a pleasant interview with the teachers, collectively, relative to the best mode of conducting them. Much energy and good management have been exhibited here, in the erection of suitable school and dwelling houses for teachers. As it is not likely this people will soon be removed from this healthy location we think rather more than ordinary inducements are held out for us to send more teachers and laborers for their elevation.

Having finished our visit to the Freedmen in the Department of the Cumberland, we went down the Mississippi River, and arrived at Memphis on the 2d of 2d month; but as Colonel Eaton, Superintendent of Freedmen in this Department, was absent at Washington, on business, we thought it best to go to Helena, Ark., a town on the river, sixty-five miles below Memphis, containing a population of nearly four thousand persons, one-third of whom are colored. Upon the surrounding high bluffs are ex-

tensive fortifications, commanding both the town and river. At the camp, three miles below, there are about four hundred and fifty Freedmen, who are living upon Government rations. Here we found several cases of small-pox, but no hospital for their accommodation; and, in many other respects, this camp is in poor condition, owing mainly to the neglect of the Superintendent, who was then being tried before court-martial, and has since been removed. A new Superintendent has been placed in charge, and we have reason to believe their condition will soon be improved. Freedmen are arriving here almost daily, in a destitute condition, so that our stock of clothing at this point is answering a good purpose. Such as are able to labor will be employed during crop season, upon the adjoining lands.

The Orphan Asylum in town, under the management of Calvin and Alida Clark, is a place of much interest. They have sixty children, in a small two story frame house, with five rooms, and some small out-buildings for cooking and dining rooms. Government furnishes rations and fuel for the institution. The former consists of barrel pork and beef, beans, flour and corn meal, and Calvin Clark occasionally exchanges a barrel of pork or beef for molasses. Each child is furnished with a tin cup, tin plate, knife and fork, and an iron spoon, and as the room is small they stand at the table to take their meals. The smaller children sleep five in a bed, with their heads to the side, instead of the end. They are comfortably clothed, attend school regularly, have daily scriptural instruction adapted to their capacities, and all appear cheerful and happy. In short, everything about the Asylum appears to be managed in the most judicious and economical manner. A Friend is conducting an industrial school at this place, in which she is instructing the women and girls to cut out and make clothing. Some new goods are used in this way, but the largest proportion of the material consists of second-hand over-coats and other army clothing, which, under her management, are converted into capes, jackets, vests, pants, skirts, &c., for the Freedmen. About one hundred have taken lessons in this school, and from ten to twenty are daily engaged, who receive reasonable wages,

either in money or clothing, as they may prefer, and the expenses are met by the sale of clothing, at low rates, to those who have means to pay for them. About four hundred and fifty children and adults attend schools, under eight teachers, five of whom are members of the Society of Friends. Most of them are reading easy lessons and writing on slates, while a few are studying geography and arithmetic, and we would remark that their orderly conduct and good progress speak well for the teachers.

They have short Scripture lessons daily, and we were surprised at their prompt and correct answers to questions relative to the mission of Christ, the plan of salvation, and many others, both upon the Old and New Testament. And we take pleasure in acknowledging that the labors of our friends here have been greatly facilitated by the co-operation of General Buford and wife, who have showed themselves to be true friends to the Freedmen.

Island 63

Is situated twenty-five miles below Helena, and contains eight hundred Freedmen. A large number of the men and women are chopping wood for Government, and others cultivate the land during the summer season, so that almost all are self-sustaining. A friend and his wife are conducting one day school and one industrial school, and otherwise laboring for their elevation.

We arrived at Vicksburg on the 8th of 2d month, and found Elkanah and Irena Beard preparing to return home. They think the present necessities of the Freedmen as to clothing, has been relieved. Some are arriving almost daily at different points, in a very destitute condition, yet the various local agents are expected to give attention to their wants. In the afternoon we visited several schools, which impressed us favorably, and in the evening took a boat for Davis' Bend, about twenty-six miles below. Upon this Bend there are about nine thousand acres of land, seven thousand of which are tillable, and the number of Freedmen variously estimated at from five to seven thousand. These are located in five or six different colonies, and a super-

intendent, vested with some military authority, is placed over each colony. The home-farm, of eight hundred acres, formerly the residence of Jefferson Davis, is under the management of Captain Norton, who, in the cultivation of the land, is authorized by Government to give employment, by the day or month, to such of the Freedmen as have no farming implements, or are unable to manage a tract for themselves, and they are paid reasonable wages, either in money or provisions, as they prefer. The balance of the land on the Bend will soon be divided up into parcels, adapted to their capacity and industry, by the respective superintendents of colonies, and leased to the people for the year.

Hundreds of small huts and cabins, principally of split timber and poles, have been put up by these people. Some are endeavoring to give them an air of comfort, while others look extremely filthy. At the adjoining farm, known as the *Joe Davis place*, is located the resident surgeon for the Bend, Dr. Foster. Near his quarters are five new Government Hospital buildings, in which are about two hundred, under medical treatment. The surgeon told us that nourishing food, shelter, and warm clothing, were the best remedies for most of his patients, for a large number of them had but recently come into the Union lines, and had been sent there, suffering much from exposure and exhaustion. The cleanly and orderly appearance of these premises, as well as the deep interest which Dr. Foster otherwise manifested, lead us to believe that he is the Freedman's friend. Although one of our agents has recently visited almost every hut upon the Bend, distributing clothing to the needy, we think it advisable to send five boxes to Dr. Foster for distribution amongst the destitute as they arrive, and also among the aged and infirm at the hospital.

An intelligent young man, formerly a slave upon this plantation, has just opened a small store of groceries in a shed near the hospital, which he is selling at reasonable rates to his fellow Freedmen of the different colonies.

We look upon Davis' Bend as a favorable location for these people, and they appear to be generally healthy; but those in authority think that about as many are already here as can do well.

The United Presbyterians have two ministers and ten teachers here, two or more of whom have been appointed superintendents of colonies, and we were informed by them that two more teachers and two more ministers were on the way to this place. Owing to the want of more and better school-houses, there are only four schools, with an aggregate attendance of about five hundred pupils.

Pawpaw Island.

On returning to Vicksburg, we thought best to embrace an opportunity then offered by a boat to go to Pawpaw Island, a distance of sixteen miles above. This island is a large Government woodyard, seven miles long, and varying from two to four miles in width, containing about six hundred and fifty Freedmen, most of whom earn a support by wood chopping, and they generally have pretty good huts to live in.

Here are three hundred children attending schools, taught by five teachers, four of whom are Friends; one of these has a night school, composed of parents and laborers, and we were surprised to see the anxiety evinced by this class (many with gray heads and spectacles) to learn to read. The school closed by singing a hymn, and one of the old men offered prayer, asking blessings upon all the teachers, and their relatives at home, the good people of the North, for their assistance, as well as ourselves and families.

We believe our friends here enjoy the confidence of these people, and are laboring earnestly and successfully amongst them.

Vicksburg.

We then returned to Vicksburg, which appears to be a great center for Freedmen. Out of a population of near fifteen thousand, it is estimated that twelve thousand are colored, and on the peninsula opposite Vicksburg, it is thought there are three thousand more. Here, as well as at most other places in this Department, we were surprised to see them generally so well clothed. Two miles north of Vicksburg is a camp of near five hundred, who are comparatively comfortable. In the city,

during first month, twelve hundred children attended schools taught by eighteen teachers, sent out by various benevolent associations in the North. Several meeting-houses have been appropriated for their use, in which they hold regular meetings for Divine worship, as well as large day and Sabbath schools; also one of the largest hotel buildings in the city is nicely kept as a colored hospital.

We also visited the home farm on the peninsula opposite Vicksburg, known as Beard's Camp. Most of the people here have larger and more comfortable houses, and they presented a more cleanly appearance than any camp on the river which we had visited. Unfortunately, however, the exposure of this place to guerrilla raids is such that the teachers have given up their schools.

There is as little sickness among them as at almost any of the camps; and although they are not secure against raids from guerrillas, we do not know that their condition would be much improved for the present by their removal.

A picket line has lately been extended across this peninsula, along Grant's Canal, inclosing the home farm, Burney place, and De Soto, which gives the people some confidence in their security. There are about fifteen hundred acres of tillable land, which they hope to be able to lease of Government for farm and gardening purposes.

This peninsula is similar, in many respects, to Davis' Bend; and, we think, quite as desirable a location for them, except that it is not yet so well protected.

Our attention has been repeatedly called to the condition of the orphan and destitute children of Vicksburg and vicinity, of whom it is estimated there are six hundred. The Superintendent of Freedmen for this district, Colonel Thomas, offers to furnish rations and fuel for such an institution, and to donate one thousand dollars from the Freedmen's fund; and the Treasury Agent offers, for the same purpose, any confiscable property suitable, in or around Vicksburg, not occupied by the military authorities. After a careful consideration of this matter, we are inclined to recommend the opening of such an institution as soon as possible.

The opportunities for Freedmen to get employment are increasing, and many are obtaining good wages, but we notice that the prices of goods of all kinds are very high. This leads us to the conclusion that a stock of such things as are adapted to their necessities, offered for sale in Vicksburg, at or near cost, would be a great encouragement, as well as advantage to them, in their efforts to become self-sustaining.

Memphis.

On our return we stopped at Memphis, where the number of colored people is estimated at from twenty to twenty-five thousand; and as respects food and clothing, they are, for the present, in a comfortable condition. Such as come into the Union lines in a helpless condition are sent immediately to President's Island, three miles down the river.

The Superintendent of Instruction informed us that, during first month, eleven hundred children were reported in schools, taught by twenty-two teachers, and twelve schools among the colored soldiers, numbering in attendance one thousand and twenty-nine. There are also two industrial schools in the city, doing well.

We had a very satisfactory interview with Col. Eaton, who had just returned from Washington, with orders from the President to continue the management of Freedmen's affairs as heretofore, until Congress took some action upon the subject.

President's Island.

On President's Island, which contains nine thousand acres of land, there are said to be twenty-nine hundred Freedmen. The day before we arrived, about four hundred were brought to Memphis, from Arkansas, eighty of whom, were considered able-bodied, and taken into Government service, and the balance sent here, in a very ragged, dirty, and destitute condition.

These people came a long distance through the swamps and marshes of Arkansas, with the army, and a number of the women and children were drowned or chilled to death by the way. As they sat in groups, or parts of families, on logs or stumps, with no houses to go into, exhausted and discouraged, they presented a most pitiful spectacle.

The officer in charge informed us that an ample supply of clothing would be furnished them from Memphis the next day. On this Island are five or six hundred acres of tillable land, besides a large body of woodland, and wood-chopping is one of the principal means of support.

Three hundred and fifty pupils are being taught by four teachers, and thirty-six orphan children are gathered into two cabins, under the care of a colored woman. There is also an industrial school in good hands. There are probably from ten to fifteen hundred children upon this Island, and not more than one-fourth can at present attend school, and the parents and soldiers stationed here appear quite as eager to learn as children. A saw mill, and an abundance of timber, furnish good facilities for building purposes, and we learn that more school and dwelling houses will soon be put up.

After spending a few hours from hut to hut, we came to the conclusion that the many necessities of the Freedmen were presented to us here, under as favorable circumstances, to be alleviated by our organization, as any place we have visited. We, therefore, recommend that a suitable man and wife, with four or five teachers, be immediately sent to this Island.

We visited the Orphan Asylum for colored children in Memphis, recently opened by the Widow Canfield, where we found eighty of this class, gathered from the abode of wretchedness, and comfortably provided for in a hotel building, assigned by Government for that use. We think the energy and self-denial displayed in this enterprise is well worthy of imitation.

A large amount of clothing has been distributed among the Freedmen in the Mississippi Valley this winter, by our agents, who have visited extensively in the various camps, and we heard frequent testimonials from those in charge, as well as from the Freedmen, of the large amount of suffering these timely efforts have relieved.

Spring has already opened, and very little more clothing (except for those continually arriving) is likely to be needed before fall; therefore, our efforts during the summer can, perhaps, be the most profitably directed toward the establishment of Orphan

Asylums, Industrial and other schools, to promote their social, moral, and religious elevation.

The many privations to which our teachers are necessarily subjected, awakened our sympathy, and we would recommend that, as far as possible in the future, they be located in companies, so as to make up in a measure for those privations.

It may be proper to remark that a systematic supervision of schools, in this department, has gone into effect under an order of Adj. Gen'l. Thomas, and local superintendents are appointed, whose duty it is to procure school-houses, and otherwise assist in the advancement of this work, and to whom each teacher in his district is required to make a monthly statistical report.

We would also add, that, probably one-half of the companies of colored soldiers at Vicksburg, Helena, and Memphis have schools, taught by their officers or others. In and at the the schools among the Freedmen, they spell, read, and write on slates, while in some of them a few study geography, arithmetic, and the rudiments of grammar.

From what we have seen of Elkanah and Irena Beard's labors, and from the statements of officials and missionaries similarly engaged, as well as from the many testimonials of the Freedmen themselves, we believe, they have labored diligently and successfully, not only in relieving physical wants, but in the promotion of the higher interests of this people.

In the Departments which we have visited there are about one hundred thousand Freedmen, (a tabular statement of which is appended) amongst whom are very few if any able bodied men, the Government having taken the better class into the army.

As we passed through the various colonies of this people, we have frequently seen evidences of the brutal abuse they have been subjected to whilst in slavery, and the fatality during the transition thus far, from slavery to freedom, has been fearfully great. It is indeed painful to hear the narratives of their sufferings in their efforts to escape, but such is their anxiety for freedom, they are willing to undergo almost any hardship to secure so rich a boon. Many of them appear to have long an-

ticipated a relief from bondage. Both old and young evince great earnestness in their efforts to learn, and many advance rapidly. They are religiously inclined and receive Gospel truths with avidity, and although the missionary work is but just begun, *we believe the charity already bestowed under the Divine Blessing has been attended with great results.*

JOSEPH DICKINSON, } Committee.
JOHN M. MACY, }
T. C. HILL, Gen'l. Agent.

TABULAR STATEMENT OF FREEDMEN.

| Camps and Home Farms. | No. in Camp or home farms. | Whole No. of Freedmen. | No. in schools 1st month, 1865. | No. of Teachers | No. of Industrial School. |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Gallatin, Tenn..... | 460 | 1960 | 500 | 6 | 0 |
| Hendersonville, Tenn.... | 800 | 800 | none | 0 | 0 |
| Nashville, Tenn..... | 1000 | 16000 | 600 | 14 | 0 |
| Murfreesboro, Tenn..... | 250 | 250 | 100 | 2 | 0 |
| Decatur, Ala..... | 450 | 450 | none | 0 | 0 |
| Huntsville, Ala..... | 800 | 800 | none | 0 | 0 |
| Clarksville, Tenn. } Providence, " } | 1300 | 4400 | 900 | 12 | 0 |
| Memphis, Tenn..... | none | 25000 | 1100 | 22 | 2 |
| President's Island..... | 2850 | 2850 | 350 | 3 | 1 |
| Helena, Ark..... | 450 | 1750 | 450 | 8 | 1 |
| Island 63..... | 800 | 800 | 100 | 1 | 1 |
| Island 98..... | 150 | 150 | none | 0 | 0 |
| Island 102..... | 650 | 650 | none | 0 | 0 |
| Pawpaw Island..... | 650 | 650 | 300 | 4 | 0 |
| Vicksburg..... | 500 | 15500 | 1200 | 18 | 0 |
| Davis' Bend..... | 6000 | 6000 | 700 | 10 | 0 |
| Natchez..... | 700 | 700 | 200 | 2 | 0 |
| Little Rock, Ark..... | 325 | 15325 | 150 | 2 | 0 |
| Pine Bluff, Ark..... | 600 | 1600 | 200 | 2 | 0 |
| Duwall's Bluff..... | 80 | 80 | none | 0 | 0 |
| | 17815 | 95715 | 6850 | 106 | 5 |

We give a statement from two camps, showing the proportion of men, women, and children, which is an approximate exhibit of all of them :

Gallatin, 25 men, 160 women, 260 children. Wood's Colony, Davis' Bend, 150 men, 470 women, 370 children.

Thirty-four of the above laborers are members of the Society of Friends.

APPEAL OF FRIEND'S BOARD OF CONTROL.

From the foregoing report of the condition of the Freedmen in the various localities where our missionary efforts have extended, there is much to encourage us in the continuation of this good work. While their pressing wants as to clothing seems to have been met to a considerable extent, we should bear in mind that, before cold weather, they will need another supply, and, in addition to this, the hundreds that are coming into the Union lines daily, in great destitution, call loudly for our prompt assistance.

While there are many flourishing schools among them, the number of such fall far short of the constantly increasing demand. This fact, in connection with the great desire manifested by them to learn, and the rapid progress they make, should, we think, stimulate us to greater efforts for the enlightening of this down-trodden and benighted people.

We also look upon Industrial Schools as of very *great* advantage to them in their efforts to become self-sustaining, and we would call the attention of the various committees and Friends generally, to the necessity of such schools in every camp.

While looking after the interests of this people, we should not fail to consider the condition of the destitute orphans, who are numerous in almost every camp. Vicksburg and vicinity, especially, demand immediate attention. We cannot too strongly urge upon Friends and others the absolute necessity of active means for the establishment of an Asylum at this place, where six hundred children, without means and without friends, are thrown upon the cold charity of the world, and unless early steps are taken for their relief, many must suffer, sicken, and die. This is but one of the many places where Orphan Asylums, in connection with schools, would be of incalculable benefit to this class.

We repeat, there is no time for delay. Let Preparative, Monthly and Quarterly meetings, through their committees, enter at once upon the work, and forward the proceeds of their subscriptions to the Treasurers of the various Executive Committees, which will enable them to prosecute this good work.

CINCINNATI, OHIO,
3d Month, 13th, 1865.

DANIEL HILL, Sec'y.